

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03

SS-20 USIA-15 ACDA-19 IO-14 NIC-01 DRC-01 AID-20 EB-11

OMB-01 /182 W

----- 044210

R 051715Z DEC 73

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8282

INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMCONSUL BOMBAY

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMCONSUL MADRAS

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, IN

SUBJECT: BREZHNEV VISIT: DOMESTIC POLITICAL IMPACT

REF: NEW DELHI 14010

SUMMARY: BREZHNEV VISIT STRENGTHENED PRIME MINISTER'S POSITION WITHIN RULING CONGRESS AND VIS-A-VIS OPPOSITION, HIS PRAISE FOR PRIME MINISTER'S AND CONGRESS' COMMITMENT TO SOCIALISM AND CALL FOR CLOSER CONGRESS-CPSU TIES UNDERMINED EFFORTS BY PRO-MOSCOW COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA (CPI) TO RETAIN SEPARATE, MILITANT IMAGE. PREDICATABLE CARPING BY OTHER OPPOSITION PARTIES MADE LITTLE IMPACT. END SUMMARY.

1. BREZHNEV VISIT TOOK PLACE AGAINST DOMESTIC BACKDROP FEATURING REASSERTION OF INITIATIVE BY PRIME MINISTER AFTER SUMMER DOLDRUMS DURING WHICH MRS. GANDHI HAD MADE IT CLEAR THE BREZHNEV VISIT WAS NOT THEN TIMELY. CPI HAD ATTEMPTED THROUGH AGITATIONS AND STRIKES TO DISTANCE ITSELF FROM CONGRESS PARTY

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SEEMINGLY UNABLE TO CONTROL PRICES, OVERCOME SCARCITIES, OR

CONTAIN CORRUPTION. TO SHORE UP HER POSITION, PRIME MINISTER HAD BEGUN OVERTURES TOWARD OPPOSITION OLD CONGRESS FIGURES AND TOWARD LARGE BUSINESS HOUSES. CPI CRITICISM OF CONGRESS DOMESTIC POLICIES TO TOOK FORM OF AGITATIONS AND STRIKES, EARNING IT BOTH INDIRECT AND DIRECT REBUKES FROM PRIME MINISTER.

2. BREZHNEV'S REPEATED PUBLIC PRAISE FOR PRIME MINISTER GANDHI AND FOR CONGRESS PARTY'S PROGRAM "OF BROAD SOCIO-ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION DESIGNED TO IMPROVE LIFE OF THE PEOPLE" ACTED AS A TONIC FOR BOTH. NOW THAT SHE HAS ONCE AGAIN RECEIVED BREZHNEV'S BLESSINGS, CONGRESS LEFTISTS MAY FIND IT MORE DIFFICULT TO CRITICIZE PRIME MINISTER OR HER POLICIES.

3. CONGRESS AND CPI BOTH MOUNTED MASSIVE PROPAGANDA AND POPULAR CAMPAIGN TO WELCOME BREZHNEV, BUT HIS PUBLIC STATEMENTS AND REPORTED PRIVATE ADMONITIONS APPEAR TO HAVE PLEASED FORMER MORE THAN LATTER. IN WIDELY PUBLICIZED TOW-HOUR CONVERSATION WITH CONGRESS PRESIDENT SHARMA, BREZHNEV ADVOCATED CLOSER TIES BETWEEN CONGRESS AND CPSU, TO DISCOMFITURE OF RIGHTIST/ CENTRISTS WITHIN CONGRESS AND OF CPI. IN PRIVATE MEETING WITH CPI CHARIMAN S.A. DANGE AND GENERAL SECRETARY C. RAJESHWAR RAO, BREZHNEV IS RELIABLY REPORTED TO HAVE ADMONISHED THEM TO EXTEND FULL COOPERATION AND SUPPORT TO PRIME MINISTER AND TO STOP AGITATIONS AND STRIKES WHICH UNDERMINE MRS. GANDHI'S POSITION AND IMPEDE PRODUCTION. CPI EMBARRASSMENT AT BREZHNEV PRAISE FOR CONGRESS PARTY REFLECTED IN CAREFUL EXCISION OF BREZHNEV'S REFERENCE TO CONGRESS FROM REPORTING ON VISIT IN CIP WEEKLY NEW AGE DEC. 2. BREZHNEV'S LENGTHY EXPOSITION OF THE BENEFITS OF DENTENTE AND FAILURE TO CRITICIZE EITHER USA OR PRC BY NAME MAY ALSO SOMEWHAT MUTE CPI EFFORTS TO WHIP UP ANTI-AMERICAN FERVOR ALTHOUGH EDITORIALS IN PRO-CIP "PATRIOT" SHOW LITTLE SIGN OF THIS THUS FAR.

4. RIGHT OPPOSITION PARTIES PREDICATABLY CRITICIZED PRIME MINISTER, CONGTESS AND CPI FOR EXPLOITING BREZHNEV VISIT FOR "NARROW PARTY ENDS". THEY ALSO QUESTIONED WHETHER LINKING OF SOVIET AND INDIAN PLANNING AND INCREASED SOVIET ASSISTANCE FURTHER PROCLAIMED ROLE OF "SELF-RELIANCE". CPI-M WELCOMED STRENGTHENED BILATERAL TIES BY DEPLORED BREZHNEV'S PRAISE OF "BOURGEOIS-LANDLORE"-DOMINATED CONGRESS REGIME. BREZHNEV PARTIALLY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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DEFUSED CRITICISM THAT CONGRESS HAD COMPLETELY BOTTLED UP BREZHNEV AND KEPT HIM FROM OPPOSITION SPOKESMEN BY AGREEING TO LAST-MINUTE MEETING WITH SOCIALIST PARLIAMENTARIAN MADHU LIMAYZNO WHO REPORTEDLY TOLD BREZHNEV HE WAS UNDER NO COMPULSION TO COMMEND CONGRESS PERFORMANCE ON DOMESHD SIYOE. MOYNIHAN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: FOREIGN RELATIONS, AGREEMENTS, POLITICAL STABILITY, VISITS, POLITICAL LEADERS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 05 DEC 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973NEWDE14255
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: NEW DELHI
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19731244/aaaabgag.tel
Line Count: 113
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: NEW DELHI 14010
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 27 SEP 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <27-Sep-2001 by martinml>; APPROVED <11-Jan-2002 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: BREZHNEV VISIT: DOMESTIC POLITICAL IMPACT
TAGS: PINT, PFOR, IN, (BREZHNEV, LEONID I), (GHANDI, INDIRA)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005